

**Interim Meeting 2025
Address to the AMA House of Delegates**

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President**

Healers and Warriors

Madam speaker, members of the board, delegates, colleagues and guests, it is an honor to speak to you this evening.

It is an awesome sight to stand on this stage and look out upon the incredible diversity of our profession.

Almost a thousand physicians

Every state and specialty.

Different backgrounds and ethnicities.

Some educated and trained here in the U.S., others abroad. But each of us committed to advancing medical practice to create a better future for our colleagues and our patients.

This House – this family– represents what is truly great about our AMA. These gatherings – and the impassioned and informed debates on this floor – showcase the very best of our profession

I can only simply say thank you for giving me purpose.

When we last convened this House in June – you challenged us to speak louder. To be more resolute against the headwinds we face.

We heard you and I'm proud to say that over the past five months that's exactly what we did.

And the measurements are telling us we are successful. AMA's social media posts have been viewed over 18 million times since June – more than doubling our engagement from the first half of the year.

We've spoken out against the extraordinary financial pressures facing all of us but especially those like me on the front lines – pressure due to 25 years of declining Medicare payment rates.

We opposed the administration's decision to remove well-respected physicians from the advisory panel on immunizations, and have repeatedly warned against government intrusion into our exam room.

We called for physicians to be exempt from an outrageous application fee for H-1B visas – a hundred thousand dollars per doctor – recognizing the vital role that IMGs, like my parents, play in a health system stretched far too thin.

We've continued to push back against non-science – nonsense – and we loudly reaffirmed the importance of immunization in protecting generations of children from deadly disease like measles.

On these issues and so many others, the AMA remains a steady, trusted voice for science, for evidence, and for ethics that underpin our profession.

But physician advocacy is not just about the opposition we face. It's also about progress we make — and finding common ground to advance the goals of physicians for the good of our patients.

That's why we've worked with federal leaders to modernize e-prescribing, strengthen interoperability, and fight information blocking — long-standing frustrations for every clinician that could be so much better if they simply move us beyond using fax machines!

We've supported efforts to expand nutrition education in medical schools — emphasizing prevention and lifestyle changes as cornerstones of better health and more efficient health care

We welcomed the administration's AI Action Plan — because we believe health technology must be ethical, transparent, and led by physicians.

We said thank you for taking action to protect our patients from massive drug costs on medications like GLP-1s.

And we applauded long-overdue prior authorization reforms that could, maybe, just maybe, actually work this time!

The AMA will work with anyone to fix the problems in health care that are driving burnout and physician shortages, that burden us with excessive paperwork and badly designed technology – not a person on the other end that drops us from a 99204 to a 99203. All of these challenges limit people's ability to get the care they need.

This is more than a commitment we share. It is a pledge we took to do what's right.

If you heard my [inaugural address](#) in June or have seen me at events or interviewed on television, you know that my hometown of Flint, Michigan, is always close to me. In fact, it is the lens through which I see the very best and worst of our health system.

Flint is a city of startling contradictions. Fiercely proud and filled with tenacity yet deeply troubled by the societal challenges that contribute to high rates of chronic illness, depression, psychological distress. and other conditions that lead to lower life expectancy and diminished quality of life.

There are wonderful doctors in Flint – like my wife Nita, an OBGYN, with whom I’m lucky to share both my life and my practice.

But there are far too few doctors to meet my city’s needs and our country’s needs.

Wait times for specialists like us can be measured in months.

More than one third of Flint residents live at or below the poverty line and are enrolled in Medicaid.

So, I think about the AMA’s advocacy priorities as they relate to my hometown – knowing that the same cracks in the health system that are devastating physicians and residents of Flint are doing the same in communities across our country

When the most challenged communities in our country confront public health issues like lead in the water and also the double whammy of lacking the most basic health coverage: Medicaid...

We can do better.

In South Dakota – where I spoke last month– there is one primary care physician for every 760 residents, among the highest gaps in the nation.

In Mississippi – where I spoke this summer – there is a significant shortage of OBGYNs – threatening to make matters worse in a state already grappling with some of the worst rates of infant and maternal mortality.

And in Nebraska – where I appeared in August – about two-thirds of its counties are considered medically underserved, with many rural hospitals struggling to stay open.

How do we live with this failure in so many health outcomes? How is this possible in a nation that spends more money on health care – a lot more – than any other country on earth?

And more important for the work we will do here this week: How can we work together to fill these cracks?

How can we leverage the power of the AMA - of every state and specialty society – to achieve this?

Let's start with the most basic: physicians need a sustainable payment model that supports both employed and independent doctors – reflecting the increasing costs of actually running a practice.

We have tried before and will keep trying, even harder – including for Medicare and Medicaid – until our lawmakers share our wisdom in this investment.

We need an adequate physician workforce to alleviate stress on the system and ensure patients always have access to a physician-led team.

We need those doctors to be the best and most highly skilled we can attract – no matter where they're from.

We need a health system that incentivizes preventive care like routine checkups and screenings so that we can spot a health concern before it becomes a life-threatening emergency.

We need to remove barriers to medical school education and make sure all who pursue medicine have a foundation that will prepare them for the health challenges of tomorrow instead of today's massive, increasing debt.

We need technology that enhances, not hinders, our work — tools where we spend less time looking at our screens and more time looking at our patients.

And we need relief from administrative demands that drive burnout, and relief given to us by a system that not only allows – but encourages us – to take care of our own mental health needs and feel the joy in medicine.

This isn't the health system we have today, but it is the health system our AMA is fighting for.

And with your help – and your voice – and our perseverance– this is the health system we will have.

In this room we are a very special physician community – a community of advocates and leaders focused on the biggest health challenges our country faces.

But for me, I continue to face a very personal health challenge that I have not kept a secret.

In fact, my family jokes that I can't stop talking about it. And they're probably right, but it's because I milk 'em for sympathy and use it like a get out of jail free card.

But actually, I share my story of recovery from brain cancer wherever I can because every so often someone reaches out to me to say, "That happened to me, too."

Every time we build one of those connections – it's a bond. And those bonds get stronger whether they are open and honest conversations with our colleagues, or even with our patients.

I have no sorrow for what I am going through. In fact, oddly, I am grateful for the preparation God gave me before I took on this responsibility.

I am thankful for being a patient challenged by the very things that I – that we – fight for as doctors: improved access to care, and a more responsive health care system

It was one year ago today actually that I stood at a microphone and gave an update to what was then called the Minority Affairs Section. The words weren't coming out right, and were it not for this house showing its concern, my diagnosis of astrocytoma would have been delayed.

I thank this house. I thank you for fighting for me when I wear my patient gown instead of my white coat.

This work of ours sustains me.

When we love what we do — when we're fighting for something that matters — we don't tire. We move forward. We run.

I often check how many days I have left as AMA president. Today it says 204.

I do this not because I'm fatigued but because, when I see the days I have left to run, I'm energized. I run harder because I see the finish line approaching.

Our mission — restoring the joy, meaning, and respect that first drew us into medicine — our mission is worth every ounce of effort.

It is worth the fight.

We must be one AMA — unified, resolute, and committed to the health of our patients and the strength of our profession.

So tonight, I challenge every physician in this room: Let us be healers, yes — but let us be warriors when necessary.

Warriors when we need to fight. Fight for our patients. Fight for our colleagues. Fight for the future of medicine.

Let's tear down barriers and lead with purpose and compassion.

Let us fight when necessary.

Let us heal always.

And let us lead together, forever

Thank you.

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